



Position statement 4

Marketing and customer relationships

This statement sets out shared principles for what a partnership agreement could contain on marketing and customer relationships.

Why should this be included in partnership?

The main objective of any operator-PTE partnership agreement will be to deliver growth in bus patronage, both from existing users and through modal shift. A partnership agreement will generally involve investment in 'facilities' for bus users and improvements in the condition of vehicles. There should be a good story to tell the public. Hence, a marketing plan is likely to be a key feature of any partnership agreement.

- Marketing is a key part of the agreement covering a range of aspects, including promotion, advertising, and public relations.
- Marketing involves raising awareness of the partnership initiative, promoting it, influencing passenger behaviour, and encouraging modal shift.
- Marketing assists in capturing and retaining the hearts and minds of current and prospective passengers and encouraging smarter travel choices.

How will we work together?

In most networks, operators and PTEs will already be investing substantial sums in marketing bus services. The extent to which existing marketing programmes are subsumed within the partnership marketing plan will need to be agreed locally between the respective partners.

- A joint marketing and communications plan will be developed, delivered and funded within the partnership. An annual budget will be established prior to each anniversary.
- It may include shared creative responsibilities and nominated managers from the partner organisations will be responsible for delivery.
- The scope of the plan may include: marketing and publicity (focusing on network improvement and environment) customer research, public relations, stakeholder & customer consultation (about, for example, service and fare changes).
- In particular, the partnership presents an opportunity to promote bus services in a way which each individual partner could not achieve on its own. Specifically:
- Co-ordination of passenger information, making bus services easier to understand and use
- Greater resources to enable improved ticketing technology and real time passenger information
- Improved effectiveness of PR and promotional campaigns; for example, council-sponsored 'leave the car at home days'
- An improved process for consulting with stakeholders (ITA, DfT, council members and officers, user groups, and customers) about changes to bus services.

How will it be reflected in the agreement?

- The marketing principles will be included in the agreement and supported by a Marketing and Promotional Plan aimed at targeting new users, retaining existing users and encouraging additional journeys.
- The Marketing and Promotional Plan should also address the Smarter Travel Choice agenda and include a target for promotion of Travel Plans to local schools, employers and other venues, to encourage long-term sustainable travel behaviour for those living and working near the partnership corridors.
- Consideration to should be given to what local bus information should be made available and the way in which it should be made available in line with Sec 139 – 141 of the Transport Act 2000.
- The extent to which existing marketing programmes are subsumed within the partnership marketing plan will need to be agreed locally between the respective partners, but, at the very least, a commitment to use the partnership 'badge' in all customer communications should be included.

Possible Outputs

- Leaflet door drop campaigns
- Newspaper advertisements
- Information at bus stops
- Local newspapers campaigns
- Radio and TV advertisement
- Shelter advertisement promotions
- Joint exhibitions
- New timetables
- Personal information to passengers with the partners providing staff to talk to customers
- Route maps and route diagrams
- Mail drops
- Press communications campaign
- Traffic bulletins
- Telemarketing

